

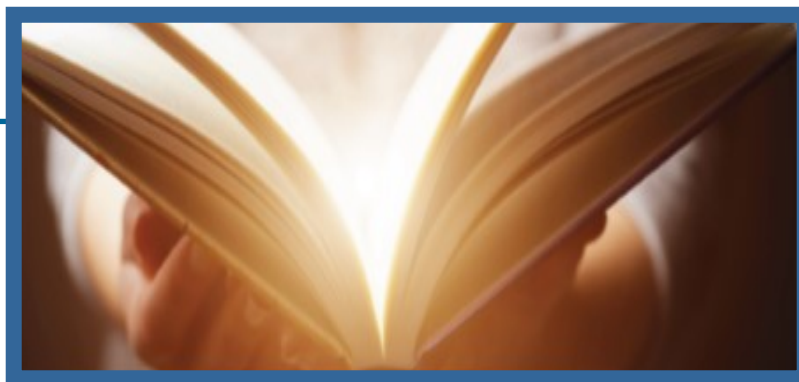


G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center

*to care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow, and orphan*

# FOCUSED ON YOU

JULY 2019



## MY LIFE, MY STORY

As part of the Veteran experience, we recently implemented the My Life, My Story program. My Life, My Story personalizes the Veteran health care experience by including a written account of their life story in his or her medical file. Healthcare providers use the story to foster treatment plans and to strengthen their relationships with Veterans.

**When a Veteran shares their life story, they validate their life experiences and invite clinicians and staff to learn who they are as unique human beings. In knowing each Veteran as a whole person, we can better understand what matters to them and how their health serves their life goals.**

My Life, My Story began in 2013 at the Madison VA Medical Center (VAMC) by writer and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Thor Ringler, who presently leads the national My Life, My Story VA community of practice out of “My Life, My Story Headquarters” at the Madison VAMC.

Patient narrative or story telling can be an excellent approach to learning who our patients are as unique human beings. Placing a Veteran’s story in the electronic health record will help introduce them to the many healthcare workers with whom they will interact and will foster more patient centered care.

The stories should be enough to capture a Veteran’s story, but not more than any busy healthcare worker would have time to read. My Life, My Story is a powerful initiative that shows strong potential in not just elevating your Patient Experience scores, but your employee’s overall VA experience as well.

Veterans interested in sharing their story should contact Voluntary Service at 601-362-4471, extension 51312.

## VETERANS NEWS NETWORK

VA's Employee Education System (EES) created a TV channel, the Veteran News Network (VNN), which has veteran-centric programming that's educational, informative and entertaining. EES began piloting this channel in a couple of medical centers in March and now we've begun airing VNN, the first facility in our VISN to do so. So far, the programming has been described as "great" and "impressive" with "lots of diverse topics." All sites have been hooked-up without any cost to medical centers (as the satellite infrastructure is already in place across VHA).



EES developed mix of informative and inspiring content while sneaking in the ultra-important educational elements. EES continues to fine tune the programming to ensure VA is providing information Veterans are currently searching for, addressing educational gaps, SecVA priorities, and working to improve patient empowerment and trust. In order to get the top news and information out to Veterans, EES developed a quick 2-minute news show (VA 360).

**Smoke free VHA**  
**Better starts today**

Join the VHA as we go smoke free on  
**OCTOBER 1st**

VHA cares about your health and is going smoke free per Directive 1085\*.

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

\*VHA Directive 1085 implements a smoke-free policy for patients, visitors, contractors, volunteers, and vendors at VA health care facilities.

**Be tobacco free! Don't use tobacco in any form. If you are using tobacco, VA can help you quit. Avoid secondhand smoke. If you are pregnant, both you and your baby will benefit when you quit using tobacco.**

### **What's Important to Know?**

Quitting tobacco is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect your family's health. If you quit smoking or other forms of tobacco, you and your family will experience short and long-term health benefits. It's never too late to quit—your health will improve at any age after quitting tobacco!

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# Be Involved in Your Health Care

## Be involved in your health care. There are many ways to take an active role. Work with your health care team to improve your health.

### What's Important to Know?

You can play an active role when you visit with your health care team. To get the most out of your visit, plan the questions you want to ask and the things you want to discuss, and be sure to leave the visit with information about your care. Here are some specific ways to be more involved in your health care and get the most out of your next visit:

#### Before your visit:

- Write down your health questions and concerns
- Make a list of all the medications you take, including vitamins and supplements to bring to the visit

Get additional information from the [Veterans Health Library](#) and [My HealtheVet](#)

#### During your visit:

- Bring a family member to help you remember what you and your team discuss
- Share your health questions, problems, and concerns with your team at the beginning of your visit
- Tell your team about your past illnesses/hospitalizations, medications, and any problems

you may be experiencing

- Tell your team about your needs and preferences for treatment and your health
- Work with your team to create a treatment plan that meets your needs and be involved in making decisions about your care

- 

Know your medications and why you take them, and ask for written instructions and information to take home with you

- Ask your team to clarify anything that's confusing, and speak up if you have concerns or think something is wrong

### Ask when and how you will get test results and additional treatments

#### After your visit:

- Get additional information from the [Veterans Health Library](#) and [My HealtheVet](#)

**Tell your team if you have problems following your care plan, or if there is a change in your conditions or health**

#### Want to Know More?

If you want to learn more about how to be involved in your health care, talk with your VA health care team. They can also help if you have questions about or interest in making a healthy living change.

[https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy\\_Living/Be\\_Involved\\_in\\_Your\\_Health\\_Care.asp](https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Involved_in_Your_Health_Care.asp)

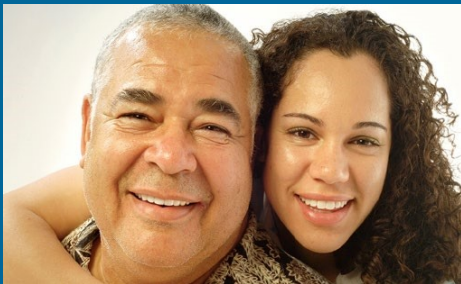
*Continued from page 2—Be Tobacco Free*

All forms of tobacco use—cigarettes, cigars, pipes, snuff, snus, chewing tobacco and other tobacco products—are harmful. Tobacco use harms nearly every organ of the body and causes:

- Cancers
- Heart disease and stroke
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other lung/breathing problems
- Complications in those who are pregnant

Secondhand smoke is the smoke released from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe, and the smoke exhaled by the smoker. There is no safe level of secondhand smoke. It can have immediate harmful effects on non-smokers' health and can increase their risk of heart disease, lung cancer, and other health problems by 20-30%.

Tobacco use is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States. Tobacco and secondhand smoke kill approximately 480,000 people in the U.S. each year.



Many good things happen as soon as you quit. You'll breathe easier, save money, smell better, and have more energy. If you're pregnant, your baby will be healthier. You'll also be protecting your health and protecting your family and friends from secondhand smoke.

### **Want to Know More?**

Talk with your VA health care team about help with quitting tobacco. Your team can help you in several different ways. They can provide medications, tips, tools, behavioral counseling and support. They can also help you join other Veterans in a class led by your hospital's expert in quitting smoking.

[https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy\\_Living/Be\\_Tobacco\\_Free.asp](https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Tobacco_Free.asp)

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